

Partner Violence in the Workplace: What Co-workers Can Do to Help Break the Cycle of Abuse

Taken with permission from: Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence

What is Partner Violence?

Partner violence is violent behavior between any two people involved in an intimate relationship. It can happen when partners are married, dating, or living together. It can happen in man-woman or same-sex relationships. Abuse can range from insults to beatings to murder.

Who is Involved in Partner Violence?

Millions of people are touched by partner violence each year. Abusers and their victims come from every class, gender, age, faith, race and sexual orientation.

Partner violence is about exercising power and control over another. In many cases this means men are the abusers and women and children are the victims. However, more and more cases of abuse are being reported by people of both sexes and all ages.

Partner Violence is a Workplace Issue.

The impact of partner violence is increasingly being felt in the workplace. Employers and employees are becoming aware of the costs of partner violence in terms of increased sick leave, reduced productivity, increased medical expenses, employee turnover and even increased safety risks. Abusers are stalking, attacking, and - in some cases - killing their victims while their victims are at work. In fact, in a recent survey, 94% of corporate security directors ranked partner violence as a high security problem.

Co-workers are often in a unique position to recognize the warning signs that someone may be a victim. Clearly, counseling should be handled by professionals, but concerned co-workers may be able to offer information to victims.

The following are some signs that a co-worker may be a victim of abuse:

- Receives harassing phone calls, faxes or visits from partner.
- Excessive tardiness or absences: missing work, leaving early, and calling in sick often.
- Need for increased supervision.
- Sudden or sustained drop in productivity.
- Inability to concentrate. Employee appears distracted or troubled.
- Evident and sustained depression.
- Frequent bruises or injuries.
- Unusually quiet or withdrawn.
- Change in appearance and self-esteem.

Once you are aware of the warning signs, there are a number of things you can do:

- Encourage her to talk in a safe, private place; but do not pressure.
- Let the person know you are concerned.
- Listen and believe.
- Don't underestimate the danger of the situation; express your concern for the victim's safety.

- Let the victim know she is not alone. Help identify options, gather information and help her put together a safety plan.
- Be patient and offer continued support. Often victims can't make immediate decisions.
- Don't tell the person what to do or make judgments or assumptions regarding the particular situation. Trained counselors are best equipped to counsel employees in non-work-related issues.
- Refer the person to the Human Resources Department for further assistance.
- Respect the person's privacy; don't let the situation become the topic of office gossip.

Partner Violence IS Your Business.

By taking the time to read this information you've taken an important first step: You've started to educate yourself about partner violence. We must all adopt the attitude that partner violence is everybody's business. This is an attitude that clearly states that abuse -- in all forms -- is not a private matter that we can afford to ignore.

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**October is Domestic
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